

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-11

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 SSM-03 CIAE-00 DODE-00
PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01
SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11 OMB-01 /094 W
-----045350 191854Z /64

P R 191706Z MAY 78
FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3227
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY NICOSIA
USMISSION USUN NY
USMISSION SINAI
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

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E. O. 11652: NA
TAGS: PINT IS
SUBJ: NO SURPRISES AT NRP CONVENTION

REF.: TEL AVIV 6270

1. THE NRP CONCLUDED ITS FIFTH NATIONAL CONVENTION
WELL PAST DAWN ON MAY 18 WITH A LIVELY DEBATE OF POLITICAL
RESOLUTIONS. THE MILD EXCITEMENT OF THE FINAL SESSION,
DURING WHICH THE PARTY'S DOVES TRIED TO CHALLENGE THE HAWKS IN
PLAIN VIEW OF THE PUBLIC, WAS THE CLIMAX OF AN OTHERWISE PRE-
DICTABLE AND DULL EXERCISE. MORE SO THAN IS USUAL AT POLI-
TICAL PARTY CONVENTIONS, ALMOST ALL DECISIONS WERE MADE IN
THE CORRIDORS AND AT PRIVATE MEETINGS BEHIND THE SCENES. THERE
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WERE NO SURPRISES.

2. AT EARLIER SESSIONS THE CONVENTION REPLACED A BURG-
FACTION STALWART AS PARTY SECRETARY GENERAL WITH DANNY
VERMUS OF THE YOUGH FACTION. HOWEVER, THE OUTGOING SEC-
GEN, ZVI BERNSTEIN, WAS GIVEN THE IMPORTANT CONSOLATION
PRIZE OF PARTY COMPTROLLER, AND ANOTHER BURG MAN, RAPHAEL

BEN NATAN WAS ELECTED SECGEN OF HAPOEL HAMIZRACHI, AN IMPORTANT ORGANIZATIONAL COMPONENT OF THE NRP. THE CONVENTION AUTHORIZED NEGOTIATIONS TO BEGIN WITH THE HISTADRUT, LOOKING TOWARD MERGER OF THE NRP'S UNION WITH THE GIANT LABOR SYNDICATE.

3. THE GENERAL RESULT OF THE CLOSELY WATCHED FLOOR DEBATE AT THE FINAL SESSION WAS A BEATING BACK OF EFFORTS BY THE DOVISH WING OF THE PARTY TO MODERATE THE NRP'S HAWKISH POSITION ON THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES. THE DOVES APPEARED ABLE TO MUSTER ONLY SOME 10-15 PERCENT OF THE DELEGATES. FIRST THE CONVENTION REGISTERED ITS DISMAY WITH THE PACKAGE AIRCRAFT DEAL BY CALLING ON THE GOI TO RECONSIDER ITS PEACE PLAN IN THE LIGHT OF THE U.S. DECISION. (IN CONTRADICTORY FASHION, HOWEVER, THE DELEGATES GAVE APPROVAL SOMEWHAT LATER TO A RATHER TEPID EXPRESSION OF SUPPORT FOR THE BEGIN PEACE PLAN.) THEN IT ADOPTED THE FOLLOWING FIVE POINTS WHICH WERE LIFTED FROM THE PARTY'S 1977 KNESSET ELECTION PLATFORM: (A) "WE HAVE THE RELIGIOUS-HISTORIC RIGHT TO THE COUNTRY WHICH WAS PROMISED TO US AS A WHOLE. (B) BETWEEN THE SEA AND THE RIVER JORDAN THERE WILL EXIST ONE STATE ONLY, I.E. THE STATE OF ISRAEL, WHOSE CAPITAL IS UNITED JERUSALEM. (C) OUR SEARCH IS FOR PEACE, A LASTING PEACE, BETWEEN US AND OUR NEIGHBORS, WHICH WILL FIND ITS EXPRESSION IN THE ESTABLISHMENT OF REGULAR RELATIONS WITH THE ARAB STATES, WITH ALL THE POLITICAL AND LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ECONOMIC COMPONENTS INVOLVED IN SUCH RELATIONS. (D) WE MUST INSURE DEFENSIBLE BORDERS FOR THE STATE WITH SUFFICIENT STRATEGIC DEPTH. (E) WE REJECT ANY PLAN THAT CONSTITUTES A RELINQUISHMENT OF ANY PARTS OF HISTORIC ERETZ-YISRAEL, THE HERITAGE OF OUR FOREFATHERS."

TO THAT FORMULATION THE CONVENTION ADDED A CLAUSE WHICH STATES THAT THE PARTICIPATION OF THE PARTY IN THE GOVERNMENT WILL BE DEPENDENT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THESE PRINCIPLES. THIS LATTER CLAUSE WAS A SIGNIFICANT SOFTENING OF THE MORE NEGATIVE LANGUAGE OF THE LAST (1973) NRP CONVENTION RESOLUTIONS WHICH STATED THAT THE PARTY WOULD NOT PARTICIPATE IN A GOVERNMENT WHICH OFFERED TO WITHDRAW FROM ANY PART OF ERETZ-YISRAEL. THIS IS VIRTUALLY ALL THE DOVES COULD SHOW FOR THEIR EFFORT. ANOTHER RESOLUTION DECLARED THAT "SETTLEMENTS ESTABLISHED OR TO BE ESTABLISHED WITH THE GOVERNMENT'S CONSENT WILL NOT BE TURNED OVER TO FOREIGN RULE." PARTY LEADERS HAVE TOLD US THAT THE WORD "RULE" WAS ADOPTED INSTEAD OF "SOVEREIGNTY", SO AS NOT TO UNDERMINE BEGIN'S PROPOSAL TO RETURN ALL OF SINAI TO EGYPTIAN SOVEREIGNTY.

4. THE PRESS IS DESCRIBING THE CONVENTION AS A CHANGING OF THE

GUARD, MARKING NOT SO MUCH A TAKEOVER BY THE YOUTH FACTION (THIS PROCESS AS BEEN UNDERWAY FOR SOME TIME), AS THE DISPLACEMENT OF THE OLDER GENERATION OF LEADERS BY YOUNG BLOOD, MOST OF WHOM ARE HAWKISH. JUST BARELY DISCERNIBLE, HOWEVER, WAS ANOTHER PHENOMENON: A SLIGHT MODERATING OR BROADENING OF OUTLOOK AMONG YOUTH FACTION MEMBERS. IN PART IT REPRESENTS AN IDEOLOGICAL RETHINKING STEMMING FROM SADAT'S VISIT. BUT IT IS ALSO THE EVOLUTION OF A DOCTRINAIRE YOUNG MINORITY WHICH SOUGHT TO WREST POWER WITHIN THE PARTY FROM ITS ELDERS BY USING THE TOOL OF NATIONALISM. THIS MINORITY APPEARS TO BE SLOWLY BECOMING A MORE RESPONSIBLE FACTION THAT CAN AFFORD TO REACH OUT TO MODERATES NOW THAT IT HAS VIRTUALLY SUCCEEDED IN TAKING OVER THE PARTY. IN THIS CONNECTION, THE NEW RESPECT SHOWN TO YOUTH FACTION LEADER HAMMER

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AMONG NRP ACTIVISTS AND THE INCREASED TALK OF HIS POTENTIAL AS A PRIME MINISTER IS NOTEWORTHY. OVER ALL, THE PARTY APPEARS TO BE MOVING TO EXPAND BEYOND ITS CONCENTRATION ON NARROW AND PAROCHIAL INTERESTS AND IS RAISING ITS SIGHTS TOWARD BECOMING A MAJOR FORCE IN ISRAEL'S POLITICAL SCENE. LEWIS

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: MEETING REPORTS, PARTY MEETINGS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 19 may 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978TELAV06539
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780211-0962
Format: TEL
From: TEL AVIV
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780539/aaaabgme.tel
Line Count: 142
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 1778179a-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 TEL AVIV 6270
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 05 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: N/A
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2631732
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: NO SURPRISES AT NRP CONVENTION
TAGS: PINT, IS, NRP, NATIONAL RELIGIOUS PARTY
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/1778179a-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014